Oahu Hawaiian Isles Aug. 10. 1850

To the Soc. of Inquiry
on Foreign Missions

Dear Brethren

Accept my thanks, for a letter from Bro. Edwards, on your behalf, dated Nov. 6/49. It came to hand about 3 mos since, & afforded me unfeigned pleasure, both from the intelligence it contains relative to the College & Sem'y; where several of the happiest years of my life were spent; & from the spirit which it indicates, in regard to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. —

It will afford me pleasure, to give you, as far as I am able, the information desired, on certain specified points.

My health, being, as it has been for many years, slender, I shall not always assign the reasons, for the opinions I give, on your questions.

1st As to the Increase or diminution of our population. It is doubtless rapidly decreasing. But a certain, wasting disease, introduced, it is said, by sailors from civilized lands, I do not set down to the account of civilization, but to the want of it. — The Hawaiians, in their heathenism, were accustomed to go almost naked, & to endure much exposure; & as civilization does imply, & induce, a decent covering for the body, they being now in their transition state, are sometimes several weeks, in a full & even warm dress; & then all but the maro — which is little more than the fig leaves of our first parents — is suddenly thrown off; hence originate colds, & various other diseases. They seem also, to suffer more from eating raw fish, & other unwholesome food than they formerly did. Perhaps these evils, at least those connected with clothing, are chargeable to civilization.

"Christianity" has I think done much to check, & alleviate the evil introduced by sailors. But the others, seem generally beyond our control. Tho. often admonished, the Hawaiians seem reckless of danger.

Christianity has also, nearly exterminated infanticide, & put an end to oppression from their chiefs which doubtless occasioned some loss of life. If the laws were always honestly executed, oppression would cease.

2nd To what extent is the English language introduced? Although for a short time it was a part of the course in the Sem. at Lahainaluna, it can scarcely be said to be introduced, except among foreigners, — There are perhaps some 1,200 English & Americans. But there is among the young, an earnest desire to learn it; & a small no. in the shipping ports, are learning it from the lips of foreigners. Perhaps 80 or 90 children, including those in the school of the chiefs, have have been taught it, in private schools.

Owing however to the decrease of the natives, & the influx of foreigners, I think it will supplant the Hawaiian tongue; & perhaps in less than 20 years. —

3d "The character of our schools." This it is scarcely possible to give precisely, to those who have never come in contact with heathenish mind. When I state, that reading, writing, arithmetic, & geography; & latterly singing, are generally taught; that the children from 5 years to 16 are required to attend school, & the teachers are paid by Govt you will be likely to attach too high importance, or rather a too high rank, to our schools; owing to the deep degredation of the minds we operate with, & upon. And yet in looking forward, if the nation shall not soon become extinct, we think it scarcely possible to overestimate the importance of the schools, to the nation. Without them, the next generation would be but little in advance of the present in intelligence; & where should we get the school teachers, officers of govt, & ministers of the Gospel all which we are beginning to furnish the two former in large nos. Moreover in all our schools the Scriptures are read, an orthodox catechism is taught, & a considerable am.t of divine truth, committed to memory. Hence we should feel, that our system was very lame, without the schools. For about 5 years the govt have wholly supported them. Previously they did something towards it indirectly.

4th As to the "Results of the late revival"; I would say, allowing for the difference in intelligence, they are the same as you will find, in more enlightened lands. There is doubtless much chaff with the wheat; yet in my opinion the proportion is not greater here, than in my native land.

5th "The influence of California." It has waked up the people to their secular interests, as, I presume, was never done before. But as yet I have heard of no painful developments of cupidity, in ch. members; which there may be ground for apprehension.

The great advance in the price of native produce 100 pr ct. or more in a few months has turned attention so much to cultivating, buying, & selling, that it has become very difficult to hire help, either indoors or out. This renders life here more toilsome; but probably it will be beneficial to the habits of our children.

6th "The effects on religion, produced by the difficulties with the French."

I should say, they are not striking, but on the whole rather advantageous. The result was so different from what the papists anticipated, that it seems to have thrown a damper on their operations. Their schools, & I believe their congregations, have since declined. And their more knowing ones, seem ashamed, to have it thought, that they had any hand in the business.

7th "The prospect of our churches sustaining themselves, as to means & men." As regards direct contributions, or subscriptions from the people, such a consummation, with a few exceptions, does not seem very near at hand.

Still, as the principal officers of govt are anxious to facilitate this object by granting land to clergymen on very liberal terms; & herds, the products of which are very profitable, can easily be kept; if the brethren will devote some attention to this object it may ere long be done; & I think without devoting so much time to secular matters, as is often done, by good ministers in the west, & South. Two pastors, & myself, an assistant have already commenced getting our support in our field. —

Dr Anderson Sec. of the Board has informed us the committee are desirous that we commence a new mission on some of the unevangelized islands in this ocean. I know not how our mission will view the subject, but it strikes some of us as the best measure we can adopt to promote the spiritual interests of this people. I hope it may be attempted.

My eldest son, Luther Halsey, who is 22 years of age, & has graduated in a medical college in N. Y. & is studying Theology, seems eager to engage in a work of this kind; & I hope he may be qualified to labor efficiently. ——

Permit me now, to say a word, relative to deciding on your field of labor. Aside from the last command of our blessed Savior, I know of no stronger argument, in behalf of the heathen, than I once heard from the lips my venerable & beloved teacher — now yours, — Dr A. Alexander. viz. "A young man, who devotes himself to the cause of foreign missions, may do as much in the circle of his acquaintance, by that act for the cause of Christ, as he could by a whole life, of ordinarily successful labors; & hence what he can do among the heathen, is about so much clear gain to the cause." I vouch for the substance only

I am aware there is a very urgent call for ministerial labor in that great, & rapidly extending republic. And could I believe, that your going to the heathen, would weaken the church there, I could not urge it.

But my firm belief is just the opposite. For He that can not lie, has said "There is that scattereth & yet increaseth. And there is that withholdeth more than is meet & it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat, & he that watereth, shall be watered also himself." Depend upon it. God will never suffer His church to languish, while she is consecrating her choicest treasures, to promote His cause where His name is unknown. I could write much, for I have thought much on this subject; but my limits will not permit. I have sometimes thought, of the vast destitute regions of the U.S., as a field for my own sons, — I have 7, s hopefully pious — but when I look prayerfully at the subject I am constrained to say, Lord if they are fit for the work, & it seem good in thy sight, let them bear the lamps of life to the most benighted portion of our race.

As you hope for peace of conscience through all your pilgrimage, & a glorious immortality I exhort you, let no selfish consideration influence you, in choosing your field of labor. Pray sincerely "Lord what will thou have me to do?" And Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee saying this is the way; walk ye in it" Then shall your path be "As the shining light that shineth more & more unto the perfect day". That such may be the happy lot of each of you; & that each may be the happy agent of turning many from darkness unto light, & from the power of Satan unto God, is the prayer of your friend &

Brother in Christ

P. J. Gulick